

23 DEC 1982

Discussions and Papers of the "December Group"

In the contributions made so far, there is agreement on two points:

- The importance for our international position of our economic recovery.
- The importance of continuing our defense program to gain greater military strength.

These two imperatives affect US strength and capabilities in a broad and fundamental way. Most of the other points made, however, deal with rather superficial phenomena in US-Soviet relations -- with tactical moves and atmospherics instead of basic strategy.

Our current predicament is likely to remain refractory to such tactical fixes. In fact, many of the moves proposed might aggravate our long-term situation in the world by confounding not only Congressional opinion, but our own bureaucracy. While our group agrees on the importance of the steady improvements in our military strength, we should not take for granted the steadiness of the requisite Congressional support for the defense budget.

Many of the moves discussed (smallish arms control agreements, a Summit, "reconciliation" in Poland, an initiative to show that Castro rejects our proposals) would fail to alter the basic trends. Such "atmospherics" should be adjuncts to a more basic policy, not substitutes.

Apart from the trends in the global military balance (on the importance of which we are agreed), the following "fundamentals" in US-Soviet relations ought to be addressed:

State Dept. review completed

- (1) The Soviet expansion into regions outside of our alliances (mainly the "Third World"). Several factors contribute to making this expansion largely a one way street: (1) The umbra of increased Soviet military power in regions close to the USSR. (2) The improved Soviet skills (and Cuban skills) in entrenching a police and security structure, which not only solidly protects the Soviet proteges, but also makes them dependent on continued Soviet support. (The Soviets learned their Egypt lesson.) (3) Congressional opposition to most of the US actions that would be needed to reverse the trend of the expanding Soviet empire. As long as the Soviets can use subversion and infiltration -- from North Yemen to Costa Rica -- but we cannot use countervailing tools in Ethiopia, Nicaragua, or Angola, we will be unable to halt Soviet expansion through diplomatic sweet talk, let alone reverse it. Hence, we must focus (a) the bureaucracy and (b) Congress on the fact that our goals are not achievable unless we can restore a certain balance in the use of non-military and para-military instruments. For the urgent and fundamental effort in this area, the "atmospheric" moves discussed by the Group can be particularly confounding to Congress and quite distracting within the Executive Branch. Our staffs will be spending most of their time in IGs and SIGs preparing US-Soviet meetings or useless demarches to Castro.
- (2) The public diplomacy/propaganda/disinformation field. At

the declaratory level, we have reached a laudable consensus

in the Administration on the importance of this area.

However, we are remiss in backing up our good words with strong deeds. Funding for the radios is still skimpy. We got licked on Radio Marti, perhaps needlessly. We are neither decided where we want to go with "Yellow Rain", nor -- it seems -- are we ready to follow through in the event the "Bulgarian connection" with the assassination attempt on the Pope becomes more tangible.

- (3) The relative importance of creating difficulties for the Soviets vs. settling conflicts or maintaining stability. Our group is conscious of this dilemma with regard to Afghanistan -- but we are drawing the right conclusion.<sup>2</sup> The PRC has occasionally talked about the need for Soviet evacuation from both Afghanistan and Outer Mongolia. Should we associate ourselves with this position? We also ought to give more weight to the fact that the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan tends to block the Soviet relationship with the Saudis and other moderate Arabs. A "settlement" on Afghanistan might lead to a Soviet-Saudi link.

We should examine alternative policies for Romania, for the event of its economic crisis becoming more acute. It is not to be assumed that US interests are best served by helping the Romanians to weather such a crisis. Turmoil in Romania could serve to weaken the Soviet Union. Similarly, our options for Vietnam should be looked at in a more dynamic way. It is not self-evident that we should facilitate the Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia.